

**United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Criminal Investigation Division  
Investigative Activity Report**

**Case Number:**

1000-0494

**Case Title:**

Cooke Aquaculture Fish Farm Release

**Subject of Report:**

2018-05-22 Phone Interview of [REDACTED]

**Reporting Office:**

Seattle, WA, Area Office

**Activity Date:**

May 22, 2018

**Reporting Official and Date:**

[REDACTED]  
Agent

25-MAY-2018, Signed by: [REDACTED]

**Approving Official and Date:**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
05-JUN-2018, Approved by: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**SYNOPSIS**

On May 22, 2018, SA [REDACTED] conducted a phone interview of [REDACTED] regarding his interactions with Cooke Aquaculture.

**DETAILS**

On May 22, 2018, I conducted a phone interview of [REDACTED] regarding his interactions with Cooke Aquaculture. After being notified of the identity of the interviewing agent and the nature of the interview, [REDACTED] in substance, provided the following information:

**BACKGROUND:**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] someone from Cooke Aquaculture relays the fish counts and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is upset and sad about the incident because of the damage it has done to the aquaculture business in the area. [REDACTED] and many others make their living from this type of activity. [REDACTED] is disappointed this occurred because Cooke Aquaculture was just about to start putting funding into their salt water operations and then Cypress Island occurred.

**HISTORY OF ESCAPES:**

[REDACTED] is aware of similar issues with net pens breaking their respective moorings in the 1990's. Two of the net pens in both the Fort Ward area and Orchard Rocks area broke loose from some of their moorings and the owners of the net pens allowed them to completely break loose and drift away. This policy was an attempt to keep the net pens intact and not destroy themselves by being tied down during severe tidal and current

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issues. In these cases, when the net pen was recaptured, the fish within were harvested and removed from the net pens.

**JULY INCIDENT:**

The FV Harvester was loading fish from Net Pen #3 when the July 2017 incident occurred. When the net pen #2 issues occurred, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] feels that when the site broke loose, that Cooke Aquaculture [REDACTED] out of the way and took over the incident. [REDACTED] made sure [REDACTED] was in charge and everything was done the way [REDACTED] wanted it done. [REDACTED] seemed to be a "know it all" and the site managers were not very happy with [REDACTED] attitude. The resident site managers for Cypress Island wanted to harvest the fish from net pen #2, but that did not happen.

There were "easily" several chances to save the fish from the net pens during the July incident. [REDACTED] believes that they could have harvested a couple of the pens, or taken all the fish out of the pens to reduce drag from the nets in the current. The FV Harvester can hold 400,000 pounds of fish and could have easily harvested the net pen over an approximate ten-day period. As an example, [REDACTED] recently harvested 150,000 fish from the Hope Island net pen, which was only half [REDACTED] ship's capacity. [REDACTED] does not know who made the final decision to not harvest the fish in July, but believes it was [REDACTED] decision.

Cooke Aquaculture could have pulled off the predator nets and possibly even released the net pen from its moorings to keep it from collapsing, but [REDACTED] had the idea that they were going to stabilize the net pen by adding tension and chains to the system. These types of current and tide changes always happen at the end of the month and with the added drag of dirty nets in the summer, this was a dire situation in which to place the net pen. There were lots of issues with net pen #2 and the drag effect underwater. [REDACTED] would describe a net pen like an iceberg, a large part of a net pen is below the water creating drag.

**AUGUST INCIDENT:**

[REDACTED] was called by Cooke Aquaculture representative, [REDACTED] a harvest supervisor, to assist in removing the fish from the net pens. When [REDACTED] first arrived, [REDACTED] harvested approximately 5,000 fish and gave them to the FV Polar Lady so [REDACTED] could stay on scene and assist.

Eventually the FV Harvester pumped and took on all the recovered fish for eventual delivery to a rendering plant.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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FISH COUNT:

█ believes that it is impossible to accurately say how many fish were recovered and possibly escaped because of the poor conditions of the fish when they were being counted. █ speculates that a lot of the fish were rolled up in the net and probably caused the net to burst which released them onto the ocean floor.

█, who has since left the company was one of the harvest managers █ worked with often. █ knows that █ was working under █ for a time and was one of the main fish counters during the August harvest. █ used a fish counter, but this was difficult as the fish had been torn into pieces by the nets and the pumping machine. █ would “scribble” numbers down and give the numbers to █. █ does not know if the numbers are accurate or if █ “made them up.”

CLAM BAY 2017:

█ is not aware of a net pen in the Clam Bay area breaking loose from its moorings in May of 2017. █ doesn't believe that this can even happen because Cooke Aquaculture's net pen in that area are “Pro Ocean Systems” net pens. In █ opinion, this type of net pen is very strong and are not going to break their moorings with continual maintenance of the tension of moorings.